

## Department of Historic Resources

[www.dhr.virginia.gov](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov)

**For Immediate Release**

April 3, 2012

### **Contact:**

Randy Jones

Department of Historic Resources;

540-578-3031; [Randy.Jones@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:Randy.Jones@dhr.virginia.gov)

## **3 NEW STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS APPROVED**

*—Markers cover topics in Henry and Stafford counties and the City of Chesapeake—*

**[Note: The full text for each marker is reproduced at the end of this release.]**

RICHMOND – A new historical highway marker commemorating Henry County’s first courthouse, and signs for Justin Holland, a black 19<sup>th</sup>-century classical guitarist and arranger, and Anthony Burns, an escaped slave who inspired abolitionists in the 1850s, were recently approved by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

The “First Henry County Courthouse” marker will be erected near the site originally selected for the county’s courthouse in 1780. That site was, as the marker notes, “either on the land that became Edgewood or in the area that became **Stanleytown**.”

During the American Revolution the first Henry County courthouse served as a hospital “for Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene’s men in March 1781,” in the words of the marker, which was sponsored by the Stanleytown Ruritan Club. By 1792, a new courthouse site was established in the newly formed town of Martinsville.

Born enslaved in **Stafford County**, Anthony Burns escaped from his owner while in Richmond, finding temporary freedom in Boston in 1854. Under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, “his owner demanded” that Burns be returned to Virginia. His arrest in Boston “inspired abolitionists to attempt his rescue,” resulting in an escort of 1,500 troops to ensure that Burns was delivered to the ship that would take him back to Virginia.

“The episode greatly increased abolitionist sentiment across the North,” the approved marker’s text states. After his return to Virginia, Burns later gained his freedom after supporters purchased it in 1855. He attended Oberlin College, became a minister, “and died in Upper Canada in 1862,” according to the marker, which is proposed for installation near Waterfront Park in Falmouth.

Justin Holland, born in Norfolk County (now part of present-day **City of Chesapeake**), “arranged several hundred pieces of music for the guitar” during the 1840s. He left Virginia in 1833 and eventually settled in Cleveland, Ohio, where he taught music. “He also played an active role in the movement to secure equal rights for African Americans

and attended the first National Negro Convention in Philadelphia in 1830,” according to the new marker.

The three markers were approved by DHR’s Board of Historic Resources during its quarterly meeting in Richmond on March 15.

The Virginia highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Rte. 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,200 official state markers, most of which are maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, a key partner with the Department of Historic Resources in the historical marker program.

The manufacturing cost of each new highway marker is covered by its respective sponsor, except for those markers developed by the Department of Historic Resources as part of a nearly decade-long program to create new markers that focus on the history of women, African Americans, and Virginia Indians. Markers created by DHR are funded by a federal transportation grant.

More information about the Historical Highway Marker Program is available on the website of the Department of Historic Resources at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/>.

### **Full Text of Markers:**

*(Please note that locations are only proposed; they have yet to be confirmed with VDOT or other officials.)*

#### **First Henry County Courthouse A-110**

Henry County’s first courthouse stood near here, either on the land that became Edgewood or in the area that became Stanleytown. In 1777, the first court of Henry County acquired land from Henry Barksdale and decided to build a courthouse. Completed in 1780, the courthouse served as a hospital during the America Revolution for Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene’s men in Mar. 1781. In 1792, the county courthouse was moved to the newly established nearby town of Martinsville.

**Sponsor:** Stanleytown Ruritan Club

**Proposed Location:** US 57 and Rte 903, in Henry Co.

#### **Anthony Burns (1834-1862) E-133**

Anthony Burns was born into slavery near here. In 1854, Burns escaped from Richmond to Boston. His owner demanded Burns’s rendition under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Burns’s arrest on 24 May 1854 inspired abolitionists to attempt his rescue, but 1,500 troops escorted Burns aboard a revenue cutter to return him to Virginia. The episode

greatly increased abolitionist sentiment across the North, with a prominent abolitionist dubbing the affair “the New Crime Against Humanity.” Supporters later freed Burns through purchase in 1855, after which he attended Oberlin College. He became a minister and died in Upper Canada in 1862.

**Sponsor:** DHR

**Locality:** Stafford County

**Proposed Location:** Waterfront Park, Falmouth

### **Justin Holland WP-13**

Justin Holland was a 19<sup>th</sup>-century pioneer African American of the classical guitar, community leader, and abolitionist. Born in Norfolk County about 1819, he left for Massachusetts in 1833. There he took music lessons and learned to play the guitar. He moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in the 1840s, became a music teacher, and arranged several hundred pieces of music for the guitar. He also played an active role in the movement to secure equal rights for African Americans and attended the first National Negro Convention in Philadelphia in 1830. He died at his son’s home in New Orleans on 24 Mar. 1887.

**Sponsor:** DHR

**Locality:** Chesapeake

**Proposed Location:** Near intersection of Galberry and Shell Roads

###